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## **NIEHS to Put More Emphasis on Systematically Assessing the Health Risks of Toxicants; Christopher Portier, Ph.D. Named Associate Director for Risk Assessment**

Christopher Portier, Ph.D., will assume a new leadership role as Associate Director for Risk Assessment at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), one of the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Portier will oversee and coordinate risk assessment activities within the NIEHS and apply the results of toxicological studies to national and international efforts dedicated to assessing the human health risks of chemical, drugs, and physical agents. The new position is in line with the Institute's renewed interest in using environmental health sciences to understand human disease and improve human health, according to the NIEHS Director, Dr. David A. Schwartz.

"We are very excited that Dr. Portier will lead this important effort," said Dr. Schwartz. "Dr. Portier has done an extraordinary job in overseeing the activities of the National Toxicology Program, and has developed strong relationships with scientists all over the world. This new NIEHS leadership role will allow him an opportunity to merge the fields of toxicology and environmental health sciences and prepare the world for tomorrow's health challenges."

Dr. Portier has served in many prominent positions within NIEHS since his arrival as a post doctoral student in 1981. Most recently he has served as the Associate Director of the National Toxicology Program, the Director of the Environmental Toxicology Program, and the Head, Environmental Systems Biology, Laboratory of Molecular Toxicology at the NIEHS.

It was in 2001 when he was appointed to the prestigious position of the Associate Director of the National Toxicology Program (NTP). The NTP is an interagency program whose mission is to coordinate, conduct, and communicate toxicological research across the U.S. government. The NTP is administratively housed at the NIEHS.

The culmination of Dr. Portier's efforts at the NTP is exemplified by his role in developing the landmark document "*A National Toxicology Program for the 21st Century: A Roadmap for the Future*," which was released in 2005 as part of the NTP 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in Washington, D.C. The NTP Roadmap outlines a

framework by which the NTP will modify, adapt, and improve its programs to better address its mandate in providing scientific information for protection of public health.

“The NIEHS remains fully committed to promoting the goals set forth in the NTP Roadmap,” said Dr. Schwartz. “The NTP has an extremely talented and dedicated staff that will keep the important work that the NTP does going strong.”

Some of the many other accomplishments achieved by Dr. Portier while at the NTP include developing the first ever evaluation guideline for non-cancer endpoints as part of the NTP’s Center for the Evaluation of Risks to Human Reproduction. The NTP has also played a lead role in developing a High Throughput Screening Initiative, which will enable large numbers of environmental substances to be screened for potential health hazards. Dr. Portier has authored more than 150 peer-reviewed publications; 50 book chapters, reports and agency publications in statistics, risk assessment and cancer research.

“Closely linking risk assessment processes to NIEHS research will improve the Nation’s ability to make informed public health decisions,” said Dr. Portier. “We will be better poised to answer the basic questions inherent to risk assessment, including: Is it possible that this substance poses a hazard to humans? If yes, how much is dangerous? Are humans exposed to this substance and in what ways? Given human exposures and knowing how much is dangerous, what levels would be safe? These are exciting times in health research and being able to focus on bringing cutting edge research into the risk assessment arena will be a challenging new role for me at NIEHS.”

Allen Dearry Ph.D., who most recently served as the Director of the Institute’s Division of Research, Coordination, Planning and Translation, will act as the Interim Associate Director of the NTP. Dr. Dearry will work closely with other leaders in the NTP during this time of transition. Dr. Dearry served in a variety of high profile science positions while at NIEHS, including the Chief of the Chemical Exposure and Molecular Biology Branch, within the Division of Extramural Research and Training. A national search for a permanent NTP Associate Director will begin in the next three to six months.

The primary mission of the NIEHS, one of 27 Institutes and Centers at the National Institutes of Health, is *to reduce the burden of human illness and disability by understanding how the environment influences the development and progression of human disease*. For additional information, visit the NIEHS Web site at <http://niehs.nih.gov>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation’s Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

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